

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. An apparatus for tracking usage and replenishment  
5 of commodity goods apparatus, comprising:

a central server including a database of at least one  
consumer profile identifying a consumer and at least one  
commodity good for usage tracking and replenishment with  
use information therefor;

10 a messaging transceiver for receiving and transmitting  
messages between the central server and the consumer and  
selectively operated by the central server and by the  
consumer; and

an evaluator for periodically determining from the use  
15 information a remaining inventory amount of the at least  
one commodity good, such that upon determining a low  
inventory for the at least one commodity good may exist, a  
reorder reminder message communicates via the messaging  
transceiver to the consumer,

20 wherein the consumer return communicates the unchanged  
reorder reminder message via the messaging transceiver to  
the central server to effect the reorder.

2. The apparatus as recited in claim 1, wherein the  
25 messaging transceiver comprises an electronic mail device.

3. The apparatus as recited in claim 1, wherein the messaging transceiver is a PDA device.

4. The apparatus as recited in claim 1, wherein the use information includes for each commodity good to be tracked a prior order number date, a prior order number quantity, and a usage rate, whereby the evaluator can determine whether the low inventory may exist.

5. The apparatus as recited in claim 1, further comprising a warehouse for obtaining the commodity goods for shipment to the consumer responding to the re-order reminder message.

6. The apparatus as recited in claim 1, further comprising modification means for the consumer to modify the reorder reminder message prior to the selective return communication of the reorder reminder message.

7. The apparatus as recited in claim 6, wherein the modification means comprises an interactive communications device capable of receiving an instruction from the consumer to effect a change in the reorder reminder message.

8. The apparatus as recited in claim 7, wherein the instruction effects the addition of an unlisted commodity good.

5        9. The apparatus as recited in claim 7, wherein the instruction effects a change in the minimum inventory for the commodity goods.

10       10. The apparatus as recited in claim 7, wherein the instruction effects a change in the amount of the commodity goods ordered.

15       11. The apparatus as recited in claim 7, wherein the instruction adds a commodity good to be tracked by the central processor for a subsequent reorder reminder message.

12. A method of tracking and replenishing commodity goods used by consumers, comprising the steps of:

(a) determining a duration between a prior order by a consumer for at least one commodity goods and a current date;  
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(b) determining an expected inventory of the at least one commodity goods based on the duration and a usage rate for the at least one commodity goods;

(c) determining a low inventory level for the at least one commodity goods by comparing a prior order quantity therefor with the expected inventory;  
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(d) communicating a reminder message to the consumer to propose a re-order of the at least one commodity goods if the low inventory level therefor is less than a pre-determined amount; and  
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(e) selectively return communicating the unchanged reorder reminder message by the consumer to effect the reorder.

20 13. The method of tracking and replenishing as recited in claim 12, further comprising the step of the consumer reviewing the reminder message and replying with authorization to ship the at least one commodity goods listed therein.

14. The method of tracking and replenishing as recited in claim 13, wherein the consumer changes the amount of the at least one commodity goods to re-order prior to replying.

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15. The method of tracking and replenishing as recited in claim 12, further comprising the step of shipping a quantity of the at least one commodity goods included in the reply message to the consumer.

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16. The method of tracking and replenishing as recited in claim 12, further comprising the step of creating an initial group of the at least one commodity goods by selecting from a list of all available commodity goods.

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17. The method of tracking and replenishing as recited in claim 12, further comprising the step of modifying the reorder reminder message prior to return communicating the reorder reminder message.

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18. The method of tracking and replenishing as recited in claim 17, wherein the consumer modifies the reorder reminder message using an interactive communications device capable of receiving an instruction from the consumer to effect a change in the reorder reminder message.

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19. The method of tracking and replenishing as recited in claim 17, wherein the step of modifying the reorder reminder message adds an unlisted commodity good.

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20. The method of tracking and replenishing as recited in claim 17, wherein the step of modifying effects a change in the minimum inventory.

10 21. The method of tracking and replenishing as recited in claim 17, wherein the step of modifying effects a change in the amount of the commodity goods ordered.

15 22. The method of tracking and replenishing as recited in claim 17, wherein the step of modifying adds a commodity good to be tracked for a subsequent reminder message.